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Morning Coffee

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Morning Coffee

by Sonja Hall

Home Economics Education, Sr.

WANDA'S hand fumbled while she groped in the darkness for the light switch. Silently cursing herself for her clumsiness, she raked the knuckles of her left hand over the roughly textured wall. The fresh rawness stung painfully in her slender fingers. If only her eyes would adjust to the darkness!

Once alone and secure in the light of the warm kitchen, she took a coffee cup from the lower cupboard shelf and filled it with the left-over brew in the coffee pot. She noted that there were still four cupfuls left according to the orange gauge beside the spout. By plunging a pink fingernail into the dark liquid, she discovered it was lukewarm enough to drink. It had been late when the Challmers had said good-night.

Wanda hated waking up to the shrill clang of that alarm clock—especially when Hank was still sleeping comfortably between the warm sheets beside her. “Waking up would be much more enjoyable,” she thought, “if Hank were the alarm—especially on these snowy sub-zero mornings.” But the weather had little bearing on the subject. Hank wanted his coffee the instant his long bony feet touched the cold linoleum kitchen floor. That’s all there was to that! He’d been this way ever since she’d married him four years ago. She didn’t expect him to change!

Nevertheless, Wanda was sure that she would continue griping when she awakened at 6:30 a.m. to put the coffee on. After all, it was a woman’s prerogative—especially when her husband was still snoozing soundly. Just then she heard the

bed-springs snap under Hank's 210 pounds. His day had begun. Within 30 seconds he would be slumping into the captain's chair across from her at the round maple table and, through a half-stifled yawn, mumble something like, "Mornin' Honey. Sure was a short night."

Once Hank had a couple gulps of that strong black coffee, he was braced for the day. This was really the only time they could spend with each other. They were frequently tired in the evenings or entertaining friends or business associates. Early morning coffee together before breakfast had always gotten them both off to a better start. Its satisfactions made getting up fifteen minutes earlier worthwhile, Wanda supposed.

"More coffee, Hank?" She rose from her chair and neared the stove.

"'Nother cup, please, Honey," Hank requested. By his second cup Wanda could usually approach the day's schedule.

"Hank, I can leave work early today. We balanced the books yesterday, so no more overtime!"

"Great! After lunch I have a conference but should be out by four. I'll pick you up and we'll run out and look at that new Super Sport in the window at Lloyd's."

She watched his eyes light up as he spoke enthusiastically of the car. It had been their goal ever since Hank had driven past the car dealer's three weeks ago.

"Sure hope you like it! That ivy green has real class, and the black interior will look good for a long time."

"Yes, it will, Hank. But are you really interested in a convertible?"

"Sure, Honey! Never had one before! Every guy wants a convertible sometime in his life. Might just as well have it while I'm young and we can enjoy it. And it's a darned good deal. You *can* see that, *can't* you?" Hank protested as he waved a fist in the air. Rarely did he get so excited.

He must be thoroughly convinced that this is the right thing to do, she mused. "Of course I realize it's a good deal, but we'd still have a hard time financing it. We just don't

have that kind of money." She heard her voice getting louder and felt a surge of warmth in her cheeks. "And besides, we don't *need* a new car yet. We've only had the Chevy two years and it's in good shape—not a speck of rust anywhere," she protested logically.

Hank angered automatically at her argument. "We need a new car! If *I* find one *I* like and one *I* think we can afford, then we *need* a new car! And we *can* afford this little gem. After all, there's just the two of us and you'll be working for a long time yet. It'd be different if we had a bunch of kids or somethin'," he reasoned impulsively.

A watery haze clouded Wanda's eyes. His words rang in her ears. Quietly she began. "I'm sorry I upset you, Hank. I wasn't trying to talk you out of it. I just wanted to make sure you weren't making any spur of the moment decisions you'd regret later. You know much better than I if we need a new car or not!" She fumbled for a Kleenex in her pocket and blew her nose. "Of course I'll go with you this afternoon. After all, it's about time I took a look at this car you can't live without! More coffee?"

"Yup! Just enough to warm it up. Gotta get goin' this mornin'. Lots of things to do today." Hank rubbed his thick fingers over his nose and rough chin, taking stock of the bristly stubble of whiskers that had cropped up since last night. His rumpled pajama tops hung loosely around his neck exposing the thick matted wiriness on his chest. His tousled short thick hair overlapped a broad forehead and the steel gray eyes were almost hidden beneath bushy black brows.

This massive hunk of male was her husband, the guiding force in her life. He brought out the fiery Irish temper in her. He had an answer for everything—his challenge always kept her alert and on her toes. He forced her to think and to make up her mind. But once her mind was made up, it was still Hank who made the major decisions in their household. They had both agreed on that long before they were married. It was only occasionally that Wanda secretly wished they could have done things her way. Most of the time she

was content to let Hank do the deciding. After all, men usually knew more about the important things.

Hank's stubby fingertips tapped rhythmically against the wooden surface. His silence was an indication of his apparent irritation, Wanda was sure. She was surprised when he began, "Well, you do realize that with this new car, the trip this summer will be terrific. We can have the top down and soak up all that sun. We'll be the healthiest vacationers alive!" His prodding was a not-so-subtle hint for an enthusiastic reply from Wanda. She squirmed. It was difficult to seem pleased about a two week vacation in the hot dry Southwest when she had wanted to visit her family in Philadelphia.

"Yes, Hank, it certainly will be a unique experience. I've thought about it considerably myself lately." She hoped her feelings didn't show.

Hank groaned as he stretched, leaned back, and balanced on the two hind legs of the captain's chair. "Well, gotta get movin' this mornin'. Come on, Honey, let's have breakfast. How 'bout pancakes?"

As her hulky mate sauntered casually through the kitchen doorway, Wanda sighed and turned toward the stove to take out the griddle. "Pancakes it'll be," she answered.

Senryu

by Evelyn R. Bracken

English, Sr.

Violent raging
Tempest without. Compare it
To your silent peace.